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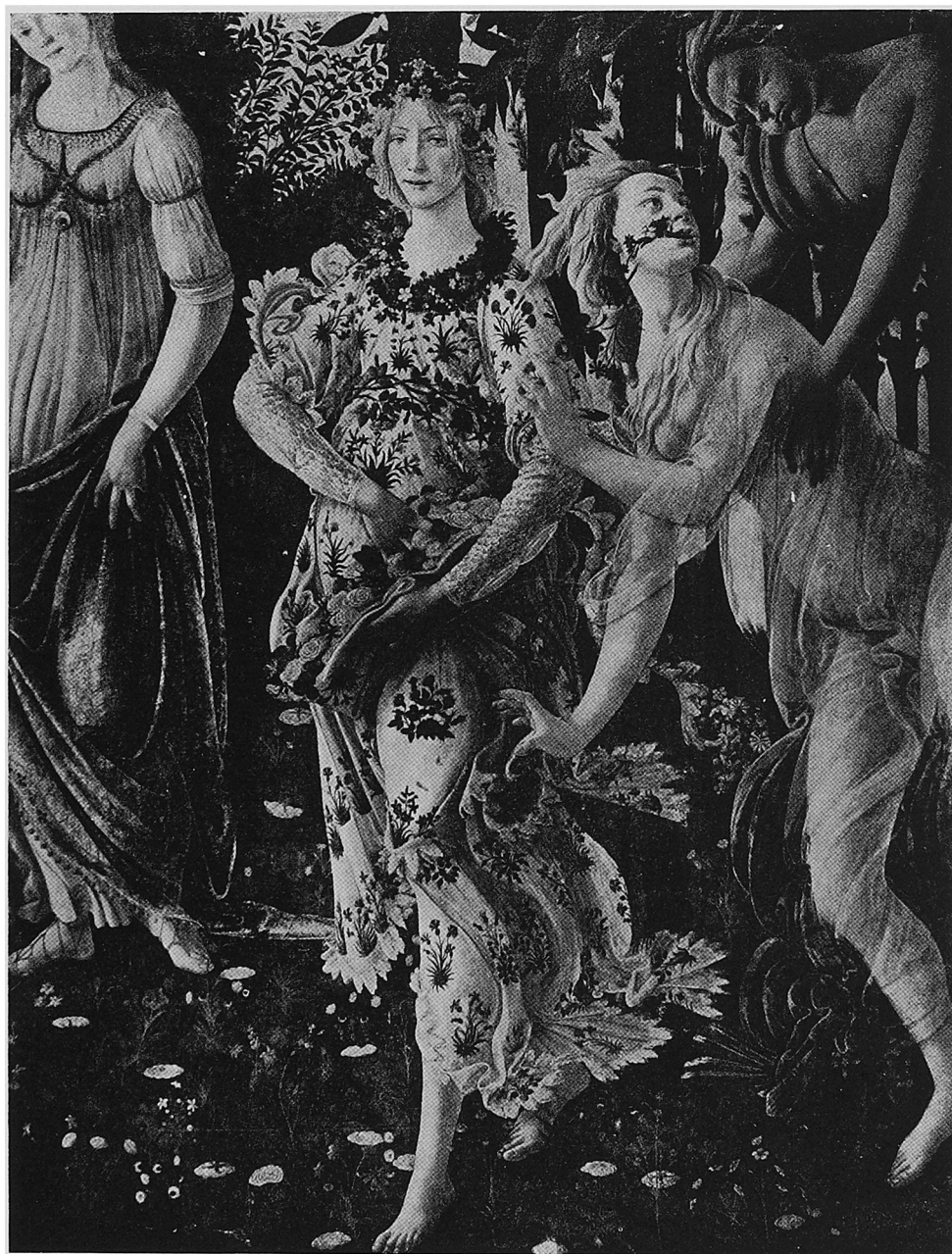
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"FLORA," DETAIL FROM "LA PRIMAVERA"  
BY SANDRO BOTTICELLI



## Period Costumes and Their Recurring Influence

BY KATHRYN RUCKER

**C**ONCURRENT with the rise of art to its zenith was Fashion's first round of her cycle; since then, she has turned the wheel backward and forward whimsically, setting it first here, then there, according to mood. Grave or gay, she is forever reviewing her past, though often from unexpected angles; but she never lacks enthusiasm in reanimating her old idols, if sometimes only playfully pulling just a few strings of her beloved littled marionettes.

Some represent the passing of long centuries, or gradual political, social or art development; others are so personal that their stamp of individuality heralds the name of king or queen, or perhaps some alluring court beauty leaving the imprint of an audacious slipper in the sands of time.

Do we not love them every one, these period puppets that conjure an unending pageant? So varied are the lines that we do not tire of the oft repeated themes, as we turn the pages of history and behold the unfailing recurrence of the period styles from Classic to Victorian. Famous artists of them all have commemorated Fashion's phantoms in crystalline expressions in form and color, that endure today sculptured in stone, molded in bronze, woven in tapestry, painted on

parchment, ivory or canvas, or transixed in fragile but imperishable glass, gold or enamel.

Whether we believe, with Tolstoy, that "art is emotion," assuredly there are few arts more emotional than dress; its evolution forms a true index to that "great tide running in the hearts of men." The same influences, ethnological, intellectual and commercial, that molded architectural forms, slowly developed costume.

Succeeding the unexampled beauty of the Greco-Roman draperies, the Gallo-Roman combination of trousers of barbaric Gaul with Roman dress maintained its popularity through almost a millenium. The addition of Byzantine details originated under Constantine, was advanced by Venetian traders, and reached its apogee through the zeal of the Crusaders centuries later.

The most imposing feature of Byzantine robes is their rich decoration of intricate patterns of symbols, particularly the circle and triangle. Characteristic examples of Byzantine dress are preserved in the superb mosaics of Santa Sophia, Constantinople; San Vitale, Ravenna; and St. Mark, Venice.

The plainer costume of the Middle Ages underwent few changes during the long Romanesque Period. It was handed down to us in countless carved sepulchral



TRIC-TRAC  
BY PIETER VAN DE VELDE



PORTRAIT OF MADAME RECAMIER. BY DAVID

effigies of kings and queens, and of martyred saints adorning the doorways of Romanesque cathedrals.

The culmination of this Period witnessed very sumptuous apparel worn alike by laity and clergy. Luxury knew bounds. Expenditures were lavish, dress and garnitures were resplendent, and rank was no longer distinguishable by clothes. A headdress of peacock feathers crowned many a vain but obscure beauty.

That marvellous chronicle of events of the Eleventh century, the Bayeux Tapestry, shows us notable variations presented by the Norman costume of that day. Women wore a gown laced to fit the figure and having tight sleeves to the wrist, there widening to a sort of cuff that fell the full length of the skirt. The men were clad in a short tunic, stockings and a cloak, and wore a cap not unlike a Scotch bonnet.

In the Twelfth century, when France conceived her mis-named Gothic arch,

Fashion, already establishing herself in Paris, aspired to a new form of dress. The fitted costume for women came into being, and modes for men now disdained Roman and Byzantine tradition and appeared in trousers, tunic and mantle of differing type that looked to the dawn of the Thirteenth century and its surcot.

The progress of French fashions was in line with the development of the Gothic idea in architecture, and the close of the Period recorded an extravagance in all attire and in feminine headdress comparable only to the magnificence and aspiration of the valuted structures. My lord and lady vied with each other in the use of costly fabrics. Velvet, tissues of gold and silver, and sumptuous silks in many colors were utilized for their costumes. Garments were long and trailing, like the graceful lines of the tall traceried windows, and those towering edifices, hennin and other headdress were easily suggestive of spire, pinnacle and living buttress.





THE CHINESE STATUETTE  
BY RICHARD E. MILLER

*Courtesy The Metropolitan Museum of Art*

Gothic influences tarried in France long after those of the Renaissance, sprung up in Italy, began to assert themselves. Francis I. encouraged the movement, and a taste for Renaissance art doubtless somewhat regulated the style of dress. During the period, extreme splendor contrasted with reserved, if not sober, costume. Semi-fitting, split-up-the-front dresses showing the underskirt and worn with pointed hat and shoes, were followed by the square-necked, tight bodice with pointed front and slashed sleeves showing the chemise, and a round-length skirt disclosing round-toed shoes. Catherine de Medici introduced the ruff in France, and this became a marked detail of the Elizabethan style contemporary in England.

Male attire consisted of short slashed trousers, square-necked doublet with slashed sleeves, stockings, shoes, mantle and small plumed hat. Materials included crimson damask, gorgeous brocades, lustrous silks and velvets blazoned with gold and precious stones and enhanced with sable and laces. The talent of ablest artists and skilled artisans was employed in designing and making the rich silks and embroideries, exquisite garnitures of jewels, fans, gloves and finery galore. The close of the Renaissance was marked by the use of such masculine vanities as the wig, the muff and earrings; by the arrival of the crinoline and the fall of the ruff, together with the appearance of the flat collar. All the tendencies of the Period led straight to the greater pomp and splendor of *le grand monarche*.

It has been said that Louis XIV. himself chose the materials—silks, satins and brocades—and the modes in which they were developed as costumes for his courtiers. Painted decorations on fabrics were a novelty, but embroidery held its own. The caprice of court favorites had much to do with feminine costume, but the key-note was always magnificence and grandure, the "Sun-King" being the imposing center around which all lesser lights revolved. In the enormous wig,

lace-frilled doublet, long hose and high-heeled shoes, and wrapped in his regal robe of ermine, he was indeed a noble figure at the beginning of his reign. By the end of it, the wig was less ample and surmounted by the three-cornered hat; and his knee-length coat was fairly simple except for exaggerated cuffs.

Madame de Montespan, with "hair dressed in a thousand ringlets" and Madame de la Lailliere with "waving hair entwined with flowers and pearls" each found hosts of imitators. Silk and satin underskirts boasted double borders of gold and long trains carried over the left arm; sleeves were shortened, scarcely reaching the elbow; the full skirt was supplemented with paniers. Lace was in great demand.

Louis XV., Louis XVI., Georgian and Colonial Periods cover the Eighteenth century. The first brought popularity to Madame de Pompadour, beautiful and powerful favorite, who had the good taste to simplify both coiffeur and costume of the preceding period. There were feminine ruffles and frills in plenty, but the King's costume exhibited less of "rococo" effect than might be expected. Square-toed shoes and buttoned and strapped leggings lent even an appearance of severity. The paintings of Watteau and his group have familiarized us with the charms of the men and women and their costumes of that day.

A return to the Classic in art began under Louis XVI., when expansive paniers, flowered fabrics and frilled fichus were sponsored by Marie Antoinette. Tight lacing, many feathers and jewels were among her foibles. These, together with every vestige of aristocratic costume, were swept away by the Revolution.

Styles of the Georgian and Colonial Periods, were, respectively, the British and American counterparts of French fashions just described, with variations and adaptations. Both were interpreted by the inevitable galaxy of beauties and gay gallants, rendered famous in both history and art.